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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY OF GLADSTONE.

BY C. C. BAKER.

Of the many towns which rose and fell during the great boom of 1887, none had a more spectacular existence than Gladstone. This was due to the fact that its promoter was a press agent of ability who professed to see in this town a future rival of Los Angeles itself.

The name Gladstone was given by its promoters to the vicinity of the old post office of Centro, which was located at the northeast corner of the present Citrus Avenue, the boulevard leading from Covina to Azusa, and Broadway, which intersects Citrus Avenue about two miles north of Covina. It was named in honor of the great English premier and it is said that a deed to a lot in the town-site was sent him and his picture was kept on display in the office of the promoters.

In 1878 Dr. E. E. Dunkenson opened the first store in Centro, and covered the neighborhood with a peddler's wagon. He continued there till 1880. E. M. Haskell opened the next store there in the fall of 1882, and on December 31, 1885, received his commission as the first postmaster of Centro, it being supplied, as was the entire district, by star route, service daily from Puente, on the Southern Pacific. In the meantime there had appeared two blacksmith shops, a cutlery factory, a shoe shop, a harness shop, a Chinese laundry and the Centro Hotel, locally known as the Pull Tight Hotel, under the management of W. P. Barnes and John Malone, both now residents of Azusa. Centro's prosperity had begun.

The construction of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad and the San Bernardino and Los Angeles Railway, the completing links of the Santa Fe's line into Los Angeles, to a junction at the San Gabriel River in the latter part of April, 1887, brought the boom to that valley. George D. Whitcomb, promoter of Glendora, was a personal friend of C. W. Smith, general manager of the Santa Fe; J. F. Crank, president of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad, was an incorporator of the Azusa Land and Water Company, promoting Azusa. Whether or not these facts affected the route, when the junction of the two roads was effected, Glendora and Azusa had a railroad, while Gladstone, which lay between them, was left two miles south of it.

On April 16, 1887, were signed the articles of incorporation of the

Gladstone Improvement Company, formed to conduct a general real estate business, the town of Gladstone being its special care. Its office was at 23 North Spring Street. Its million dollar capital was said to be actually subscribed by the six incorporators, H. H. Boyce, C. J. Richards, John Koster, E. R. Smith, C. F. Bragg and Harrison Fuller.

Of these men, the director of the company's affairs was H. H. Boyce. He served in the 45th Illinois Infantry in the Civil War, was wounded at Ft. Donelson and Vicksburg, and rose to be captain. In 1880 Boyce came to Los Angeles in the employ of Van Antwerp, Bragg & Company, one of the firms later merged as the American Book Company, with which he remained till 1884. In that year he aspired to the Republican congressional nomination, but failed to receive it. In September, 1884, he was one of the incorporators of the Times-Mirror Company, but soon disposed of his interest therein, and in July, 1886, he was an incorporator and president of the Southern California National Bank, which opened its doors in the Nadeau Block at First and Spring Streets, the first home of this Society. The title of this institution was in 1895 changed to the Merchants' National Bank. It is certain that Boyce promoted the old Tribune, which first appeared October 4, 1886, though the paper denied his interest in it. H. T. Payne guided its affairs till January, 1887. The Tribune Publishing Company was then incorporated, and F. A. Eastman became managing editor. He had been a protege of Stephen A. Douglas, who made him associate editor of the Chicago Times. The first office of the Tribune was at Requena, now East Market, and Main Streets. Later it was removed to 20 North Spring Street. In January, 1887, Boyce disposed of his banking interest, and, with C. J. Richards, lately from Racine, Wisconsin, bought from E. N. McDonald of Wilmington, a tract of 4200 acres, part of the Rancho San Pedro, which they proceeded to subdivide and sell and on which the town of Broad Acres was platted. It was stated they cleared a quarter of a million on this tract, and it was perhaps this good fortune which caused them to attempt to build the town of Gladstone. Boyce was one of the bondsmen of El Hammond, the defaulting tax collector of Los Angeles County, who left for Canada in March, 1887. In July, 1887, he was one of the organizers and first commander of Gen. John A. Logan Post, G. A. R., not now in existence.

John Koster ran a cafe at 109 South Spring Street. It is said to have been the first Los Angeles cafe to introduce music as a feature, which was at first attempted only on Wednesday nights, C. F. Bragg was the son of C. S. Bragg of the firm of Van Antwerp, Bragg & Company of Cincinnati. Dr. E. R. Smith, Boyce's brother-in-law, came to Los Angeles in April, 1887, from Rockford, Illinois.

Harrison Fuller was a resident of Gladstone, owning a fine orange grove there. He had been for four years special agent at Ft. Lemhi, Idaho Territory, for the Bannock and Shoshone Indians, under appointment of President Grant.

In March and early April, 1887, Boyce, Fuller and Richards went among the land owners near Centro and by offers of unheard-of prices, bought the property of three and contracted that of fourteen owners, in all 495 acres, extending disconnectedly on both sides of Citrus Avenue a distance of two and a quarter miles. There was no attempt to buy at a conservative figure. The land could have been purchased at from \$125 to \$175 per acre, whereas the lowest contract price was \$326 per acre. The highest price paid was \$13,000, for the "square acre" owned by E. M. Haskell, on which were his store, a blacksmith shop, the cutlery factory, and the Chinese laundry. Haskell bought this acre in September, 1882, for \$150. The total contract for the 495 acres was \$372,661, or \$753 per acre. The cash payments totaled \$84,730. It is interesting to note that while Fuller's land was included in the townsite, no contract with the company for their purchase of it was ever recorded. Another tract was contracted but the company failed to make the initial payment and the contract was never recorded.

Immediately the advertisement of the townsite began. The first advertisement, merely the word Gladstone, appeared April 10, 1887, in the Tribune. This continued till the 16th, when the first descriptive advertisement appeared. The advantages of Gladstone were told with great fervor and detail. It was said to be "on the line of two great transcontinental railways, both of which cross the land of the company." There was in this a peculiar deception. The San Bernardino and Los Angeles Railway crossed one tract which the company had contracted, but this was two miles from Centro post office, the center of Gladstone. There were only rumors regarding the Southern Pacific. Thus it was certain the Santa Fe would not touch the town, while it was not certain the Southern Pacific would reach it.

From this time till the day of the first sale of lots, spectacular and exaggerated accounts of improvements appeared, excursions were run, and everything done to create a boom. The company was said to have purchased fifteen acres in Sawpit Cañon controlling a 200-foot waterfall, which would be harnessed to generate electricity for lighting Gladstone and running its street cars. No such deed was ever recorded and the waterfall is not now in evidence. A crew was put to work placing sixty foot electric light masts on Citrus Avenue, with rush orders to have the work completed by the day of the sale. Newsome Bros., architects, drew and exhibited plans for three buildings to be erected by the company, a depot at the Santa Fe, the

company's offices and a bank building, each to be an architectural wonder. The First National Bank of Gladstone was reported as organized, but in the office of the Comptroller of the Currency is no record of an application for a charter for a bank there. A mammoth hotel, to rival the great Raymond, was one of the company's advertised projects, but it never materialized. It was said the company owned quarries near Victor, on the Santa Fe in San Bernardino County, where was "a mountain of marble of all tints," and that the completion of the Santa Fe would enable them to lay marble down in Gladstone "cheaper than brick." It is true that Boyce and his associates had bought the controlling interest in the Victor Marble Company, which owned a few mining claims near Victor, but lime was the only product ever sold by it. Improvements at Gladstone representing a half million were reported to have been made by the company. V. J. Rowan made for the company the usual map of the townsite, but of this there is of record only the plat of one block, though there are a number of deeds and contracts which refer to it.

Two enterprises by those outside the company completed the spectacular preparations. The Board of Supervisors on April 15th granted a franchise for a street railway on Citrus Avenue and intersecting streets, to connect Gladstone, Covina, Azusa and Glendora. Construction was to begin in sixty days and be completed in a year.

In April also arrived the Gladstone Exponent, the first issue of which was to appear the day of the sale. This paper was established in January 1885, in Covina, by J. R. Conlee and H. N. Short, as the Independent. Short sold out to Conlee, who sold a small interest to Fred Holt of Pomona. Holt soon sold to J. S. Eckles, and Conlee and Eckles took the paper to Gladstone, where the office was "No. 13 Citrus Avenue."

On April 23, 1887, occurred the first sale of Gladstone lots. A band wagon with Gladstone banners paraded Los Angeles streets that morning; an excursion carried the "anxious speculators" out to the town, where, after much free lunch, the sale began. "Inspired" newspaper accounts said \$100,000 worth of lots were sold that day. While there was great excitement, there is indisputable proof that nothing was sold. There are of record only two deeds covering bona fide sales by the company, one dated in November, 1887, and the other in June, 1888, both sales being to residents, and the consideration amounting to \$2862.50. Sales were held in Los Angeles April 25th and 29th, the last Gladstone advertisement appearing the 29th.

The failure to sell Gladstone lots was due partly to the ridiculous prices asked for them. \$10,000 for a few small lots was a stiff

price even in boom days. The promoters had simply lost their heads.

As Boyce boarded the train for Gladstone the day of the first sale, he was served with papers in a suit involving the title to land in the townsite. Another such suit was filed April 28th. Both were settled out of court. The Times, in commenting on these suits, warned investors against the company's title to the land, and attacked Boyce's whole business career, referring to him as "Smoothy," and to the Tribune, his champion, as the "Trombone." The publicity given by the Times stopped the sale of Gladstone lots and ended the boom. The company's title depended entirely on its making the payments called for in contracts with owners. At this time \$5500 of such payments were delinquent; by June 15th this had increased to \$47,000; after that it was a hopeless case. Of deferred payments totalling \$287,931, only \$20,600 was ever paid. In an effort to influence public opinion, Boyce began the promiscuous filing of libel suits against the Times, asking damages in three suits filed at this time of \$150,000, though he stated he "wished no money consideration." The Times said, regarding these suits, that Boyce was "not enriched thereby." They were, indeed, dismissed May 31st, on Boyce's motion.

Every effort was now made to launch a new boom, and not till now were the company's articles of incorporation and its contracts with land owners filed. The holders of the street railway franchises, J. S. Phillips of Covina, J. F. Humphreys, Eugene Riggins, J. S. Crosley, C. H. Ward, S. C. Ward and Moye Wicks of Los Angeles, incorporated as the Azusa Valley Street Railway Company. Grading was begun on Citrus Avenue, and completed in July. It went no further, though there were assessments, and rumors regarding ties and rails. In July ten thousand feet of pipe arrived, heralded as part of the thirty miles of pipe for the Gladstone water system. It was strung along Citrus Avenue, where it quietly rusted. Sixty-foot electric light masts were erected on Citrus Avenue for a mile and a half north of Broadway, a steam engine was installed to generate the power, and on July 4th, with a great flourish, the lights were turned on. This ended as suddenly as it began. In November Boyce and W. S. Monroe, the founder of Monrovia, with a Southern Pacific engineer, covered the proposed route of that road from Los Angeles to San Bernardino. Charles Crocker even wrote a letter that month to a Southern Pacific representative in Los Angeles, telling him to direct Boyce and Monroe to proceed to secure the right of way. The road, however, never materialized for Gladstone. In January, 1888, the Hotel Brunjes, with John Brunjes and T. A. Barry as proprietors, opened its doors. This was Gladstone's last acquisition.

In February, 1888, Boyce left the sinking ship. Walter S. Moore appeared as president and E. J. Niles as secretary of the company. Moore had been twelve years in the Los Angeles Fire Department, retiring as chief in September, 1887. He was the Republican nominee for Secretary of State in 1886. Niles was a newspaper man.

All appearances of a boom at Gladstone were dispelled at this time by the filing of suits by land owners for annulment of contracts on account of the failure of the company to make payments. Four such suits were filed, the company opposing them only to secure judgment for foreclosure alone, not for deficiency. The company also signed deeds returning its equity to nine other owners under the same conditions. Of the three tracts the company had actually purchased, two were deeded to its directors, who soon disposed of them, and of the two lots comprising the third, one went for interest, and the other was sold by the sheriff to partly satisfy the deficiency judgment of J. R. Elliott. Elliott sued asking for the sale of the land he had contracted and judgment for deficiency. The lot mentioned above was all the sheriff could find to levy on, so the deficiency was not covered. Elliott next sued the individual stockholders, declaring the stock of the company had never been fully paid and asking the court to levy an assessment sufficient to meet the company's indebtedness. Individual settlements out of court were made. Crane and Company next sued for the payment for the water pipe, and last, the company's attorneys in these cases, Williams and McKinley, sued for their fees!

In February, 1888, Eckles sold his interest in the *Exponent* to Bashor. The last issue appeared June 7, 1888. Conlee bought Bashor's interest, moved his plant to East Los Angeles, and with L. S. Ackerman published the *East Los Angeles Exponent* for two years at 9 South Hellman Street.

The company sold its personal property, and, in September, 1888, water pipe, electric light apparatus—"everything except the grading of the street car line," as the *Glendora Signal* put it, was removed.

The name of the post office had been changed to Gladstone January 12, 1888. Haskell had been succeeded in turn as postmaster by Thomas A. Smith, Albert Hickok, John D. Johnson, and George W. Hammel, brother of sheriff W. A. Hammel, during whose incumbency the office was discontinued August 31, 1892. Citrus Union High School, which had opened in the old Pull Tight Hotel in the fall of 1891, and after two moves, occupied the old *Exponent* office, was the last of Gladstone's institutions, remaining there till 1903, when it was removed to its present location in Azusa, the hill on which was the old Dalton adobe home. At present orange groves cover what was to have been Gladstone's "business section." The Hotel Brunjes was moved to Azusa and is now kept under the same

name, by the widow of John Brunjes, at the southeast corner of Azusa Avenue and Centre Street. E. M. Haskell's store was also moved to Azusa, and is now located on the west side of Azusa Avenue, just below Centre Street, and is occupied as a store building.

Bragg was an incorporator of the Long Beach Development Company. Richards promoted the town of Cahuenga, was interested in East Los Angeles, and was an incorporator of the East Side Spring Water Company. Koster removed to Bakersfield. Dr. Smith was an incorporator and later president of the California Hospital Association, operating the hospital at 1414 South Hope Street. Fuller is dead. His sons, C. H. and O. B. Fuller, are at the head of the Pioneer Truck and Transfer Company.

Boyce was, in November, 1887, appointed aid on the staff of Gov. R. W. Waterman, with the rank of lieutenant colonel. On May 26, 1888, he was appointed brigadier general, commanding the first brigade, state militia, but the appointment failed of confirmation by the senate. He organized the Oro Grande Mining Company to operate in Lower California, but it was regarded as a fake and soon fell through. In 1889 the *Tribune* came under Boyce's active management, went bankrupt, and was sold piecemeal January 10, 1891, by the sheriff for \$1300. While its head, Boyce was indicted for extortion for demanding payment for not printing articles regarding a justice, but was acquitted. In 1889 the *Tribune* had championed the Ballona outfall sewer proposition, but the \$400,000 bond issue for its construction failed to be voted. Boyce was in Boston on the *Arena* in 1892. He promoted a company to handle Prof. T. S. C. Lowe's "water gas," but it failed. He was killed in a street railway accident in New York City.

Though long virtually defunct, the Gladstone Improvement Company was legally in existence until December 13, 1905, when it forfeited its charter for failure to pay its corporation license tax.